

Of course, you wouldn't guess that judging by the way Democrats and the media have treated him over the past few weeks. For example, earlier this week, one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle said she would cancel her meeting with the nominee, which, of course, she is free to do. What media reports ignored was that this same Senator had announced her resolute opposition before any nominee was even announced. Talk about jumping the gun.

In an effort to stir up social media controversy, another colleague of mine suggested in dark and gloomy terms that the Judiciary chairman's use of committee confidentiality was some nefarious tool to hide salacious details about the nominee. In doing so, he neglected to inform the tens of thousands who retweeted his misleading message that committee confidentiality is, in fact, a common practice that has been used by past chairmen from both parties.

Before our friends in the media report these disingenuous claims, they should apply rigorous fact-checking to see if Democrats are telling the truth or simply crying wolf to whip up their base.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. HATCH. Finally, I would like to say just a few words about criminal justice reform. We have been at an impasse since the Judiciary Committee took up the issue earlier this year, but recent reports suggest that negotiations with the White House may soon lead to a compromise. I have not been a part of those negotiations, and I understand that they are still ongoing and there is no final proposal on the table, but I am concerned that there is no mention of mens rea reform being included in that deal.

Sentencing and prison reform can do only so much if we continue to allow individuals to be sent to prison for conduct they did not know was unlawful, even when Congress does not specify that their crimes should be strict liability offenses.

Sentencing and prison reform must be paired with a solution that addresses the root problem of criminalization, which includes the lack of clear mens rea requirements in much of our criminal law. My Mens Rea Reform Act of 2018, which I introduced earlier this summer with Senate Judiciary Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY, provides that solution. It is supported by a broad range of groups from across the ideological spectrum, from the American Conservative Union to the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

To be honest, I am troubled that the bill is not part of the current negotiations. I am likewise troubled that we have not heard any discussion of a legislative fix for the Armed Career Criminal Act to ensure that dangerous, repeat offenders receive appropriately long prison sentences. Real criminal

justice reform should be about getting the policy right. That means we cannot be looking just to ratchet back prison sentences, but we must also be looking to close loopholes that prematurely let armed, dangerous criminals back on the streets.

Comprehensive criminal justice reform is long overdue, and I am pleased to hear that negotiations are continuing. I look forward to working with my colleagues to address those concerns.

I apologize to the leader for taking so long on these remarks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank my friend from Utah.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LINCOLN PARK ZOO

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this year marks an important milestone for a true treasure in Illinois. The Lincoln Park Zoo, located in the heart of Chicago, is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

From its inauspicious beginnings with the gift of two pairs of swans from Central Park in New York City, the Lincoln Park Zoo has grown to be a destination for Chicago residents and visitors alike. The zoo is visited by 3.7 million people annually.

Visitors to the zoo appreciate its central location; it is close to cultural and shopping attractions in Chicago. But what everyone loves about the zoo is that there is no admission fee in order to enjoy the zoo's exhibits. That is right; admission to the Lincoln Park Zoo is free. In 1878, 20 years after those swans arrived from Central Park, it was resolved that the Zoo would always be free and open to the public. Today, Lincoln Park Zoo remains the Nation's only privately managed, free-admission zoo in the country.

When people visit the zoo, they not only experience the seals, gorillas, polar bears, giraffes, the big cats at the Kovler Lion House, and a pygmy hippopotamus, they also are introduced to farm animals, equipment, and practices that reflect the importance of agriculture to my home State. For many urban children, the zoo allows an introduction to nature and agriculture in a way they may not otherwise experience.

Generations of Chicagoans have fond memories of spending summer days at Lincoln Park Zoo with their families. Many can tell you that it is worth

braving the blustery Chicago weather for a visit to Lincoln Park Zoo during Zoo Lights, their annual winter celebration.

I have always considered Lincoln Park Zoo to be a hallmark of a Chicago childhood. It is a place I wanted to share with my twin grandchildren, now age 7, when they come to visit. Hopping on the 151 CTA bus and wandering the zoo grounds in summer and winter has always been a great adventure for my family.

I want to join the community in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Lincoln Park Zoo. The staff and volunteers of the zoo should be proud of their efforts to preserve and foster this Chicago treasure, ensuring future generations have the opportunity to create memories as I have done with my family.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week, on August 16, more than 300 newspapers across the Nation published editorials giving voice and testament to the vital role of a free press in our American democracy. It is such a crucial requisite of democracy that this role—this right of a free people—is embedded in our Constitution.

The words, the actions, and the service of the free American press are a daily counterpoint to the vile charges by many that the press is "the enemy of the people"—a smear that is commonly used by despots in societies that do not have the freedoms that our Constitution is intended to ensure and protect. It is all too clear today that each new generation must renew the Nation's dedication to our founding principles and ideals.

The Senate, on August 16, unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming the vital and indispensable role of the free press. I was proud to cosponsor that resolution. It is regrettable that such a resolution was even needed—or even timely.

I am proud that several news organizations in Vermont participated on August 16 in publishing editorials about the importance of a free press. I call to the Senate's attention one of these, written by Steven Pappas and published in the Times Argus of Barre, VT.

I ask unanimous consent that this editorial be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Times Argus, Aug. 16, 2018]

YES, WE ARE THE ENEMY

[Editor's note: Across the nation today, U.S. newspapers and news organizations are publishing, posting or broadcasting editorials opposing press-bashing. The idea was sparked by Boston Globe editorial page editor Marjorie Pritchard. What follows is our voice in that chorus of solidarity.]

We are the enemy. It's true. We say that with no hesitation.

If you abuse power, we are the enemy.